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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001013

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DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

PLEASE PASS TOPEC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06-17-14

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER CE NO IN LTTE

SUBJECT: Talks about Talks in Stasis while Norwegians Ponder Next Moves

Refs: (A) Colombo 983, and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The LTTE showed no flexibility on negotiation issues during Norwegian Ambassador's June 16 visit to Kilinochchi. Both sides have rejected a Norwegian compromise formulation on the negotiating agenda. The situation in the East is somewhat improved but remains troubled. The LTTE has postponed its European meeting. The Tigers told NGOs and UN agencies they want to coordinate assistance better. Norwegians will hold discussions in India this week. Norwegians will decide optimum time to resume their shuttle efforts. END SUMMARY.

No Progress for Norwegians in Kilinochchi

12. (C) Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar briefed fellow Co-Chair Ambassadors June 17 on his previous day's discussions with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Kilinochchi and on Norwegian peace efforts in general. Brattskar said he had a 90 minute meeting with LTTE political leader S.P. Thamilchelvam. Briefing Thamilchelvam on the Brussels meeting, Brattskar told him that the Co-Chairs were afraid of drift in the peace process and were concerned about the situation in the East. The positive side was that there was great interest in Sri Lanka at a high political level; the negative side was the impatience at lack of progress. Thamilchelvam had spent considerable time discussing the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), which he claimed the Government was violating in the East by supporting Karuna's forces. Thamilchelvam repeated the familiar LTTE plaint that the Tamil people have benefited from peace for the last two years but have gained little else.

13. (C) Brattskar said he responded that both sides were responsible for supporting the CFA. Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) head Trond Furuhovde would travel to Kilinochchi next week for discussions on this issue with the LTTE. (Brattskar commented that the situation in the East was better than a few weeks ago, but was still unstable.) In the meantime, the LTTE had postponed its planned leadership trip to Geneva next week for meetings with Tamil expatriate legal experts. With no date yet set for talks, the LTTE saw no reason to hold the discussions at this time.

14. (C) Ambassador asked Brattskar where the back and forth on the talks stood, and described his own talk last Friday with President Kumaratunga and her description of the situation (see Reftel). Brattskar said that both sides want Norway to continue its shuttle diplomacy, but that right now nothing is happening. The LTTE's "seemingly inflexible position" of discussions only on its Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) proposal had not allowed them to accept a Norwegian proposal that the two sides sit down without any agenda at all. At the request of both sides, the Norwegians had tried to come up with a proposal for an agenda bridging the positions of both sides, but neither had agreed to their suggestion. At the moment, therefore, the peace talks were in stasis. The Norwegians would need to decide when to come up with a new proposal. Brattskar noted that some people thought there would be no movement until after the July 10 Provincial Council elections. (Comment: We do not see a connection.) At any rate, it was unlikely there could be any movement until President Kumaratunga returned from her private visit to the UK.

15. (C) Brattskar said that the deadlock came down to the same old issues: lack of trust (especially by the LTTE), and a feeling by the LTTE that agreement to discuss final issues before an ISGA was agreed upon and implemented would mean there would never be an ISGA.

LTTE Meets NGOs and UN Agencies

16. (C) The LTTE had invited major NGOs and UN agencies to Kilinochchi June 15 to meet with the Tiger's Planning and Development Secretariat (PDS). According to participants in the meeting, the LTTE predictably asked for direct funding, and were predictably turned down. The Tigers described the PDS as a "focal point," not as a proposed implementation agency. The Tigers wanted the NGOs to "coordinate" with the PDS -- the NGOs said coordination was fine as long as it did not mean control. The Tigers said that they did not want any type of joint development work with the Central Government, but that they had no objection to projects being implemented through the North East Provincial Council, as is currently being done. The repeated their opposition, however, to a revival of the North East Reconstruction Fund (NERF) or a "NERF-like" structure, which they see as a tactic to delay or permanently replace an ISGA.

Norwegians to Delhi

17. (U) Brattskar himself is leaving afternoon of June 17 to meet Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Helgesen in New Delhi for talks with the new Indian government. Brattskar said that reports in both Indian and Sri Lankan press that current High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Nirupam Sen would leave to become Perm Rep in New York, and that Sen would be replaced by MFA Additional Secretary for Administration Mrs. Nirupama Menon Rao

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were true.

COMMENT

18. (C) The Norwegians are clearly feeling a bit frustrated. Brattskar expressed (unusually) some impatience with the LTTE and conceded that it was not unreasonable for the GSL to expect some give from the Tigers, who so far have not budged an inch from their position on the negotiating agenda. The Norwegians seem to feel now that it is best to take a breather before getting back into the shuttle business. In the meantime, Ambassador is planning an on-the-record session with major newspaper editors next week to push the message of Brussels: all sides need to move on peace or risk losing donor attention and funding. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Minimize considered.

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